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Inside Information

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CLEMSON OPENS ELECTRONIC SERVICE

An electronic advisory service that will soon reach farmers and other home owners with personal computers, opened cautiously March 8 in South Carolina with an advisory to Extension agents on spring forestry insect problems.

This is just the beginning, says Clemson agricultural engineer Jerry Lambert, who has been named computer consultant at the university.

In a month or two, he said, they'll be moving other kinds of advisories to the county agents, all of whom are equipped with Model 12 Radio Shack capability. Soon after that, the advisories will be available to farmers and other homeowners.

Lambert foresees advisories on weather, crop planting times, animal care, weed control, comparative shopping for food, roach control, commodity prices, and many other topics, including such home making tips as how to color coordinate a wardrobe.

Lambert hopes also this year to expand a computer project begun as a pilot 12 year ago in a joint effort by Clemson and Mississippi State Universities. In this project, the universities provided two cotton farmers with computers, weather stations, and computer programs to help them make management decisions.

Five percent of the farmers in South Carolina already are actively using computers in their daily routines, Lambert observes. He expects that number to increase substantially.

JUST A REMINDER

March 29 is the final date for acceptance of entries in the 23rd annual "Blue Pencil" competition sponsored by the National Association of Government Communicators.

Fifteen categories are to be judged, including not only publications but speeches, feature stories, PSAs, and design.

Entries may be made from anywhere in the United States. If you have questions, phone (703) 823-4821.

EPA STUDY FINDS UNDERSTANDING GAP

A self-analysis of the Environmental Protection Agency's handling of its ethylene dibromide announcements in 1983 found that understanding gaps opened because the agency and the public were not speaking the same language.

The NEW YORK TIMES, reporting March 13 on EPA's in-house study, said "the study offers some lessons for Federal departments that have to act on explosive issues while reporters are demanding information.

"It also cites some shortcomings of the press, including carelessness and hyperbole, that might have made the problem worse."

In September 1983, EPA announced that EDB was polluting underground water in several states. The agency ordered an immediate halt to the use of the chemical on crops, and started a process that would prohibit using EDB to fumigate either grain milling machinery or stored grains and fruits.

Public concern grew in December, the TIMES reported, when Florida officials reported finding concentrations of EDB in corn meal, grits, and hush puppies.

Said the TIMES: The EPA, already criticized as moving too slowly, was issuing technically precise statements about the number of extra cancer deaths among 1,000 people who had consumed so many parts per billion of EDB over 70 years. But the agency had no direct advice to individuals who were trying to decide how much danger they faced.

The report said: The result was bound to be public confusion and rising anxiety, which was heightened by the sight on television of local stores removing boxes of grain products thought to be contaminated with EDB.

"What was intended to be the soothing voice of assurance is conveyed or heard by the public as the crack of doom," the report found.

The report concluded: The agency has both a regulatory role and a public information role. Until an agency learns to manage both roles equally well, it will be confronting crisis after crisis.

Persons who want a copy of the rather large study should contact Frederick Allen, associate director of EPA, Office of Policy Analysis, or his secretary, Delores Swarm at (202) 382-4012. Swarm says she's already handling requests originating from coast to coast.

'INSIDE/OUT' HEADS OVERSEAS

"INSIDE/OUT: The Story of Food and Fitness" is a docudrama produced by the Video and Film Division of USDA's Office of Information for USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service. Introduced at the first Food and Fitness Fair held in Washington, D.C. in August, 1983, it has seen a lot of service since.

Now the U. S. Information Agency plans to send it overseas. Larry Quinn, chief of Video and Film Division, says USIA told him they will use it in a special medical information package on nutrition and exercise for lay audiences abroad.

SPEECH WRITING COURSE SLATED

To help teach the complex process of speech writing, especially for others--that's the goal of a course offered by the Professional Development Institute in New York Aug. 19-20.

For information about "Public Relations Writing: Writing Effective Speeches," contact Barbara Cort at (202) 840-2077.

LIBRARY PLANS SYSTEMS WORKSHOPS

The National Agricultural Library will sponsor a series of intensive-level workshops on AGRICOLA, CRIS, and CALS on these dates in 1985: April 1-5, June 3-7, and September 16-20. They will be in Beltsville, Maryland.

Requests for enrollment must be received at least two weeks before the workshop date. Twenty persons will be accepted for each workshop.

These workshops are designed to train librarians, information specialists, research scientists, and managers in the efficient use of these three interrelated USDA information systems and services.

Preference for acceptance into the workshops will be given to individuals within the USDA community, the land-grant or agricultural universities, and other cooperating institutions.

While the seminar fee is \$300, tuition will be waived for employees of the federal, state, and local governments, as well as individuals employed by land-grant universities.

WANT TO JOIN IN A PYGMY GOAT PROJECT?

Pygmy goats (18 to 24 inches high) have become so popular in Oregon, they'll be a 4-H project.

Consequently, Oregon State University is publishing a 4-H Pygmy Goat Project Manual. Evelyn Liss, publications specialist at the university, is asking if others want to join in the production.

Pygmy goats, it seems, make excellent pets and can be very useful in teaching young people about animal nutrition, health, and reproduction as well as the care and maintenance of another being. In other countries, they might be raised as a meat animal. They originated in Africa.

If you're interested in reviewing the manuscript and/or joining in its publication, contact Liss at Oregon State University Administrative Services 422, Corvallis, OR 97331, or by phone at (503) 754-3311. Her electronic mailbox is DIALCOM AGS1951.

ACCESS TO MEDIA DEEMED ALIVE AND WELL

An office of the Chamber of Commerce of the USA reports that the ideal of access to the press is "clearly alive and well" and may be broader than critics admit.

Time and space limitations often prevent in-depth treatment of issues, said the report of the Citizen's Choice National Commission on Free and Responsible Media, but giving depth of information "to facilitate wise decision-making in democracy...may be beyond the press's capability--or responsibility."

(Our report on this was accessed from The Washington Post. Access to the report itself costs \$11.)

SERIES ON DOGS PLANNED

The Oregon State University Extension Service plans a series of publications on dogs that guard sheep and goats.

To receive a manuscript for review, write Evelyn Liss, Publications specialist, Agricultural Communications, Administrative Services 422, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331, or contact her electronically at DIALCOM AGS1951. Orders placed by May 15 receive copies at production cost.

USDA TO UPDATE ITS PHOTO LIBRARY

USDA's photo library has prints and negatives that go back 50 years. People still ask for some that old.

They also ask for photos of modern farming. That's where the USDA library needs some beefing up, believes Byron Schumaker, chief of the Photography Division of USDA's Office of Information.

So Photography will ask to follow some farmers near Washington, D.C. photographically through the important times in their year.

"The farmers would telephone us periodically as they moved through different phases of the production season: plowing, planting, spraying, cultivating, harvesting, drying, calving, selling at auction, and so on," Schumaker said. "We'd visit them and spend the day photographing their operation, plus whatever else we found along the way."

Photography is asking ASCS to help find the volunteer farmers.

CORNELL SLATES AGRIBUSINESS EXECUTIVES PROGRAM

Management personnel from business and government who serve the agricultural sector of the economy are invited to Cornell University June 17-28 for the 22nd annual Cornell Agribusiness Executives Program.

Said to be the only one of its kind in the nation, the program will focus on capital budgeting and finance; the challenge of the economic environment for management; formulating business strategies; personal finance and investments; agribusiness marketing; accounting for planning and control; and the impact and implications of agricultural policies.

A special workshop series during the program will probe the frontiers of agricultural science, animal science, and biotechnology.

For further information, contact Clara Travis, Agribusiness Executives Program, 305 Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-7801, or phone (607) 256-3068.

A GOLDEN YEAR PASSES

In case you missed it...the Farmer Cooperatives magazine is concluding its Golden Anniversary celebration this month.

Published now by the Agricultural Cooperative Service, USDA, Farmer Cooperatives was born in April 1934 as the mimeographed News for Farmer Cooperatives.

There have been eight editors. The current editor is Patrick Duffey.

"If the cooperative movement fails to progress," wrote Cooperative Bank Commissioner F.W. Peck in a 1934 article, "it will be largely, if not entirely, due to forces within the movement itself...and not to those outside."

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, state departments of agriculture and land grant universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to either John Crowley or Nancy Bevis, Office of Information, Room 536A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250 or to AGR009 mailbox on the Dialcom system, or call (202) 447-7454.

